S.O.7
5651

EVANGELICAL CONSOLATION

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF

Mrs. *Bethiah Huntington*,

THE AMIABLE CONSORT OF

CAPTAIN WILLIAM HUNTINGTON.

Who departed this Life, July 12, 1799—in the 61ſt Year of her age.

BY ZEBULON ELY,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN LEBANON.

Bleſſed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, ſaith the ſpirit, that they may reſt from their labors; and their works do follow them.

REV. XIV. 13.

PRINTED, IN NORWICH, BY *JOHN TRUMBULL*,
M, DCC, XCIX.

A

FUNERAL SERMON.

1. Thes. iv. 18. *Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.*

THE words to which the Apostle refers in this passage are these which are recorded in the five preceeding verses. They are words with which he comforted them, with which he would have them comfort one another, and with which it is suitable that Christians should comfort one another on all similar occasions. The occasion was the loss of dear christian friends. With such, my brethren, we have been called to part from time to time. And having now before us the remains of a dear and respected sister, it may be seasonable to turn our attention to the consolation which the gospel affords in such cases.

To the mourning Thessalonians, our great and beloved apostle writes thus, *But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.* Here you will observe in what consoling terms he speaks of the state of departed believers. He doth not speak of them as in a state of death, but as asleep. Having accomplished as an hireling their day, having gone thro' the labor and toil appointed them, they have gone to rest. The grave is indeed a cold bed, but Jesus, by having lain in it himself, hath rendered it comfortable to all his people. Now concerning such, saith the apostle, I would not have you ignorant. I would have you know and understand what this state is and take the comfort of it. They are not dead, they are only asleep,

and

and of course will wake up in God's due time. Sorrow not therefore as others who have no hope. The heathen, to whom the life and immortality brought to light in the gospel are unknown, and others who have no hope, may sorrow abundantly. It cannot otherways be expected. But Christians, however their natural affections may be moved, have an unfailing source of consolation.

There are many considerations which with the greatest propriety, may and ought to assuage their grief.

For (to proceed in the words of the apostle) *if we believe that* Jesus *died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in* Jesus *will God bring with him.* Here the estate of departed believers is spoken of in terms still more comfortable. In the former verse the apostle spoke of their being asleep, in this he describes them as sleeping in Jesus. Since by the covenant of grace they are still united to him as members of his mystical body, even while they be mouldering in the dust, he considers them as yet were infolded in his arms.

The consideration of their sleeping in Jesus must afford consolation inexpressibly sweet. Surely they must have a safe and comfortable lodging whose weary limbs are reposed in the arms of the Saviour. This is spoken with reference to their bodies. Such care is taken of those clay tabernacles in which they performed their service for Christ. As to their spirits they are now with Jesus. No sooner are they absent from the body than they are present with the Lord. Being once separated from this body they are forever freed from all sin. They are made compleatly holy and thus they are qualified to enter the immediate and glorious presence of a thrice holy God. With him they must be happy for he is their life. They love him above their dearest earthly friends. He is more to them than all created objects

objects. They love their brethren and sisters, near relatives and friends; they love the holy angels, they love all the creatures of God as such and admire all his works in proportion as they respect his glory—But as no one is worthy to be compared with the infinite eternal, incomprehensible Jehovah, and as their obligati ons to all creatures are nothing compared with their obligations to their Creator, redeemer and Sanctifier, so He must be proportionably dear to them. While they contemplate his glory they must be swallowed up in him and filled with joy inexpressible.

Hence how desirable is their present state! If we love them shall we not and ought we not to rejoice, that our loss is their unspeakable gain? To be freed from all moral evil, being entirely conformed to the blessed God, to be placed above the reach of all temptation so as to be sure of never doing any thing again to displease him, O how desirable! This is an object for which believers are striving, laboring and praying so long as they continue in the world.

To join that pure, that spotless, society above, where the excellent of the earth, the friends of Jesus the renewed and sanctified, have been collecting together in all ages since Abel first led the way; to set down with Abraham. Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, to unite with the four and twenty elders, with the saints both of the old and new testament, consisting of patriarchs, prophets, apostles martyrs and other faithful servants of the Most High; to unite with them in that world of light, love and joy, in celebrating the praises of God and the Lamb, how blessed, how glorious!

This we are assured is the case with our departed Christian friends, for they have gone to dwell with Jesus. This is implied in that it is said *them also which sleep in* Jesus *will God bring with him.* Observe, our Lord will come again. Of this we shall have occasion to take more particular notice hereafter. When he comes

comes he will bring his saints with him. He will bring their spirits from the world above, and he will bring their bodies up from the grave. We are warranted to believe this glorious truth upon the same ground that we believe that JESUS himself died and rose again. For Jesus died and rose not as a private person, but as the federal head and representative of believers. And by this rising he is to be considered as the first fruits of them who sleep in him. When Jesus rose from the dead, all believers virtually arose in him, so that tis certain they will actually arise.

THE doctrine of the resurrection is one of the fundamental and glorious doctrines of the gospel. By it we are assured that there is a future state, that the soul exists in that state when separated from the body, and that the body itself will remain in the dust but for a season. The same apostle in the first epistle to the Corinthians treating on this subject observes, *it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor, it is is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.* So wonderful, so striking is the contrast between the body of the believer when laid in the grave and when raised up at the last day.

WHEN our Lord shall come in his glory, however there may be at that time millions of saints alive on the earth, ready to hail the joyful day yet he will not be unmindful of them who sleep in him. *For* (addeth the apostle *this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.* Then he proceeds to give some brief account of his glorious descent *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall arise first.* Whenever the inspired writers have occasion to speak of this event, it is in the most grand and majestic terms. Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied saying, *Behold*

hold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, &c. Daniel after speaking of the kingdom of this world declares saying, *I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the Antient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth, from before him: thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set and the books were opened.* In the Evangelists he is described as coming in his own glory, in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels, who are all to attend him on the great occasion. When he triumphantly ascended into heaven in presence of his disciples who stood gazing after him, two angels declared saying, *This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven!* Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians declares saying, *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* Peter speaks of these visible heavens and earth as kept in store, reserved unto fire to grace the solemnity of that awful day. John in the revelation declares saying, *Behold he cometh with clouds: and every eye shall see him: and they who pierced him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.*

From these and similar representations we are led to conclude that the second coming of our Lord, will form a most striking and glorious contrast with his first coming, which was in a still silent manner, attended with circumstances of astonishing humiliation. His second coming will be with a shout of joy, triumph and glory. Whether this shout will be distinct from the voice of the arch-angel and the trump of God, perhaps we cannot positively

poſitively determine. From the manner in which it is mentioned we ſhould be led to ſuppoſe it would be ſomething diſtinct. Perhaps it will be with thunderings ſimilar to thoſe on mount Sinai when the law was given, only ten thouſand times more awful and majeſtic. Or perhaps it will conſiſt of the united voice of the myriads of holy angels and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, ſhouting for joy that the great day is come, in which all the enemies of God and his people are to be overthrown and vanquiſhed forever, and the marriage of the Lamb to be celebrated. This triumphant ſhout will probably give the firſt intimation of the coming of the Lord to the inhabitants of earth and hell. Then, we are led to conclude from the account, the arch angel will make proclamation, that the great day of the Lord is come. Then the trumpet will ſound, which will be heard thro the remote corners of the earth, and the deep cavern of hell beneath, ſummoning the inhabitants of both worlds to appear before the tribunal of the judge.

And the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt; that is they ſhall riſe before the wonderful change equivalent to death and the reſurrection, will be wrot on the living ſaints. The number of ſaints who will then be alive on the earth, will probably be very great, and they will never die, but they will undergo a change putting them into the ſame ſtate with thoſe who ſhall be raiſed. This aſtoniſhing and glorious change, by the mighty power of God, will be wro't upon them in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. But previous to this the ſaints who are ſleeping in Jeſus ſhall be awaked.

THEN (addeth the apoſtle) *we which are alive and remain ſhall be cought up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord.* It ſeems our Lord, with his glorious retinue, will not come quite down to the earth, but will erect his throne in the middle of the region of the air. Then the ſleeping ſaints being raiſed and the living changed, the

whole

whole like one immenſe cloud blazing with glories, will aſcend in triumph; and after attending with him on the ſolemn proceſs of the general and final judgment, they will go up with him to Paradiſe, and take poſſeſſion of thoſe bliſsful manſions which he is now preparing for them. And ſo ſhall they be ever with the Lord. They ſhall be with the LORD, that infinately amiable and moſt glorious being in whoſe preſence there is fullneſs of joy and at whoſe right hand there are pleaſures forevermore. *So* ſhall they be ever with him, in a ſtate of triumphant joy. They ſhall be *ever* with him. Millions of millions of ages ſhall bring them no nigher the end of their felicity, for an end there ſhall never be. So long as their glorious Lord lives, they ſhall live and be happy in him.

THEN dear Chriſtian friends will be perfectly united in one moſt amiable and glorious ſociety, never to be ſeperated. It will conſiſt of many millions, a great multitude which no man can number, gathered out of every kindred and nation and tongue. Each will be compleat in the image of God, and be everlaſtingly ſatisfied with his glorious likeneſs. There, near and dear relatives and friends, who united in the fear, love, worſhip and ſervice of the ſame glorious God and Saviour, huſbands and wives, parents and children, brethren and ſiſters and other kindred ſouls whoſe hearts were one, and eſpecially, ſpiritual fathers and their ſpiritual and beſt beloved children; will all meet together, behold each other with aſſurance of ſpending a bleſſed, and glorious immortality together!

THERE they will have opportunity to extend their acquaintance thoughout all the heavenly regions and learn form each others lips, from Abel downward till the laſt choſen veſſels were gathered in, the various dealings of Divine providence, and the particular means

which they were ſeverally wro't upon and bro't ſafely home to glory. Feeling deeply intereſted in each others concerns, they will recollect and relate their reſpective hiſtories, the joys and the ſorrows of their pilgrimage with inſtructive entertainment. Each one by loving the bleſſed God with all his heart, and by loving his neighbour as himſelf, as far as his capacity can extend, will emboſom the hapineſs of the whole. The pureſt benevolence will then fill every heart, the law of ſincerity and kindneſs will rule every tongue, and the moſt endearing and friendly offices be performed forever.

These are the words with which the great apoſtle, whoſe heart melted with the kindeſt affections, exhorted afflicted believers to comfort one another. And truly what words can be fuller of conſolation? Do we mourn the loſs of a near chriſtian friend, who was bone of our bone and fleſh of our fleſh, and not only ſo, but one ſpirit with us; what ſweet and ſatisfying conſolation muſt it afford, that ſuch ſleep in Jeſus. Releaſed from the troubles and labors of this life, ſweetly compoſed to reſt in the arms of their Saviour, can we be ſo ſelfiſh as to wiſh them back again? If that body which was ſo nearly allied to us was very dear to us, let us conſider, that it is much dearer to Jeſus. The duſt of his ſaints is precious in his ſight, and he will raiſe it up at the laſt day. That body which was employed in his ſervice, which was ſpent in doing and ſuffering his will ſhall be raiſed up and glorified with him. Having been kept under and bro't into ſubjection, agreeably to his example and the ſelf denying precepts of his goſpel, it ſhall be everlaſtingly refreſhed with the moſt delightful ſenſations.

Do we mourn the loſs of their ſociety?—We may ſtill have fellowſhip with them in the love, the wor-

ſhip

ſhip and ſervice, of the ſame glorious God and Saviour. And tho we cannot converſe with them in the ſame form as heretofore, yet let us rejoice that they are converſant with the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. Let us prepare to follow, and know that it will be but a few days before we ſhall meet them never to be ſeperated. Believers are all travelling the ſame road, and they will all meet within a few hours of each other, in the ſame happy manſions. Inſtead therefore of mourning over the dead, would it not be wiſer to ſet one's houſe in order, to gird up the loins, to trim the lamp and be in actual readineſs to follow?

But it is time that I pay ſome more particular attention to the ſolemn occaſion which hath called us together. The remains of a very worthy member of this church and ſociety are now before us. We doubt not ſhe was one of thoſe, with reſpect to whom, the unſpeakable conſolation in the text, applies. Early in life, in the ſweet bloom of youth, ſhe remembered her Creator and hopefully made choice of that good part which ſhall never be taken away. Her converſion was attended with ſuch ſound conviction, ſuch clear and comfortable diſcoveries, that ſhe was none at a loſs with reſpect to the time, or known by her moſt intimate acquaintance to call it in queſtion. After thoſe painfull and diſtreſſing exerciſes which are uſual in ſuch caſes, light broke in upon her mind with great clearneſs, and ſhe was bleſſed with ſuch a foretaſte of thoſe joys with which we truſt ſhe is now filled, that for a conſiderable time ſhe ſeemed to live in the ſuburbs of the New Jeruſalem. Her after life gave diſtinguiſhed evidence that her ſuppoſed converſion was not a deluſion but a glorious reality. Her acquaintance and friends can all teſtify that ſhe adorned the chriſtian profeſſion. She ſo appeared to love religion, and was ſo bleſſed in the family ſhe reared up, that ſhe was entitled

titled to the honorable appellation of a mother in Israel.

Charity was a distinguished trait in her amiable character. Following the directions of the apostle James, she did not content herself with saying to the poor and needy, Be ye warmed and be ye clothed, but with a feeling heart and a liberal hand, gave those things which were needful. Objects of charity in her, will mourn the loss of a kind benefactor. All her Christian friends will mourn the loss of one whose house and whose heart were ever open to receive them and whose conversation was pleasing and edifying.

But the bereaved and afflicted partner and children of the deceased, must most sensibly feel their loss. It having pleased God, respected Sir, to remove from you your lover and friend, you will not fail with deep attention to notice his hand. Some time must probably elapse before you will fully know the greatness of your loss. To you, the world is emptied of one of its choicest inhabitants, so that you will find yourself alone as you never have expericenced before. Your bosom friend and companion, with whom you took sweet counsel in all the concerns of the present and a future life, will be sought in vain in those places which once knew her, but will henceforth know her no more.

In your solitary afflicted state, may you find more room in your heart for the blessed God, enjoy more of his life giving presence; and when the greatest stream of your earthly comforts is clean dried up, may you be blessed with a fuller participation of the unwasting fountain.

In your great affliction you have such abundant consolation

conſolation that you will be in no danger I truſt, of fainting under this righteous rebuke. From the love you bear your dear departed friend you will rejoice that her gain is in proportion to your own loſs. The ſatisfactory evidence which a long and moſt intimate acquaintance muſt afford you, that your beloved partner now ſleeps in Jeſus, and that her immortal ſpirit is glorified with his beatific preſence, much ſweeten your bitter cup and mingle a predominant joy with your grief. It will of courſe mount up your thoughts more frequently and more intenſely to that world of unmixed delight, where all the ſanctified, all the ſpiritually amiable, all the redeemed of our Lord, are collecting together, never to be ſeperated.

You will not fail to notice with lively gratitude to your heavenly father, whoſe afflictive ſtroke is now upon you, that he was pleaſed to give you, and ſo long to continue unto you, ſo worthy a companion. Tho you were not permitted to live together to the great age of your deceaſed parents, yet your union hath been happily prolonged. Having lived to educate the children with which you are bleſſed and to ſee them all ſo agreeably ſettled in the world, ſurely you have great occaſion for thankfulneſs. And tho your earthly union is diſſolved, you truſt a ſpiritual union ſtill ſubſiſts between you and ſeveral of your offspring never to be diſſolved. In that you may, you ought to rejoice, and may it quicken you to have all things in readineſs to follow.

With the afflicted children, having enjoyed for a time parental tenderneſs and Chriſtian council in the ſame family, I feel as tho I ought ſenſibly to ſymparhiſe. Great indeed are your obligations, dear and reſpected friends, great are your obligations to the Father of mercies, that you have ſo long enjoyed

joyed so affectionate, so valuable a friend. The amiable, the pious, the benevolent example she hath set before you, the religious instruction she hath given you from early life, together with the maternal kindness with which she hath ever received and treated you, will never be erased from your memories.

You are sensibly affected that her departure proved so near at hand, tho you had little expectation but that the disorder with which she was visited would in the issue prove fatal; but considering the peculiarly distressing nature of that disorder,* have you not reason to be thankful? you know, and the recollection must be full of the sweetest consolation, that she desired the time might be cut short, and that she might have a speedy and chearful confidence in our glorious Redeemer, it was her desire, if it might consist with his will, that the time might be cut short, and that she might have a speedy and easy passage. In these respects she was gratified.

Tho clothed with mournful attire and affected with the aspect of each others grief, you will not fail to comfort one another with those precious consoling words referred to in the text. May you each possess a happy portion of the spirit, which essentially constitutes a Christian, and follow her whereinsoever she followed Christ. United with the Divine Redeemer and all his, may you be prepared to follow, and be sure to meet where dear Christian friends will no more be seperated.

And may other near relatives and friends of the deceased be wise to profit by this afflictive providence. Your dear sister and friend being removed into the world of spirits, give all diligence that in like manner you

* *A Cancer in the breast.*

you may welcome the ſummons, and make as happy an exchange as we truſt by the grace of God ſhe hath made.

And now my brethren, ſuch being the conſolation of the goſpel how great are our obligations to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in whom it is all treaſured up, and thro whoſe blood and interceſſion it is opened to us? Such indeed are our obligations to him as they are not and cannot poſſibly be to any creature, nor to all creatures put together. As in his own Divine perſon he infinitely excels all creatures, ſo in his relation to us he is nearer and ought to be dearer than any creature, yea dearer than our own lives.

Let us therefore acquieſce in his holy will in all things, and be devoted to his ſervice without the leaſt reſerve. For all which we can do and all which we may be called to ſuffer for his ſake, will not be worthy to be mentioned in compariſon with what he hath done and ſuffered for us. As we love our Chriſtian friends, as we peculiarly love all who love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, how great are our obligations to him, and how ought we to thank and praiſe his name, for all which he hath engaged to do and which we are aſſured he will accompliſh? It is he who hath redeemed us at the expence of his own blood; it is he who hath effectually called us by his word and ſpirit; it is he who works all our works in us and for us. How many precious immortal ſouls hath he renewed and ſanctified and ſaved, who are now rejoicing in his preſence, while their bodies ſweetly ſleep in the duſt, being united unto him. What a bleſſed retinue of holy ſpirits will attend him when he comes in the great day; and what bleſſed numbers will then be alive on the earth to hail his approach! What an

eternal

eternal inconceivable weight of glory will the church, his fair bride, ſuſtain! O what everlaſting ſprings of conſolation are contained in the goſpel, and how is every deſire of the benevolent heart prevented by the loving kindneſs of Jeſus!

To conclude, ſince the goſpel contains ſuch unſpeakable conſolation, let all the ſons and daughters of affliction, apply themſelves to this fountain. And ſince the goſpel reveals ſuch unſpeakable, ſubſtantial and glorious joys, let every child of mortality become wiſe and ſeek happineſs where it is to be found. Let him ſay from the heart

"Now I forbid my carnal hope,
"My fond deſires recall,
"I give my mortal intereſt up
"And make my GOD my all."

FINIS.